

IV. Public Access Policies

Public access for low-impact recreational activities is allowed, with conditions, on lands and waters of the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System when compatible with water supply protection and public safety, and when guided by the Division's Master Policy on Public Access (below).

Located in central Massachusetts, the Quabbin Reservoir is an unfiltered public drinking water supply providing drinking water to over 2.5 million people in 47 communities in metropolitan Boston including three in Western Massachusetts (Chicopee, Wilbraham, South Hadley Fire District #1). The reservoir was created in the 1930's to provide pure water for metropolitan Boston and future generations.

As an unfiltered water supply, the DCR is required by the MA Department of Environmental Protection (and US EPA) to implement a public access/recreation plan which controls public access and recreational activities on the lands and waters so that they do not pose a threat to the drinking water's quality.

In developing and implementing Public Access Plans over the past 15 years, we have found that existing activities have more participants as time progresses. Including additional recreational activities will only make protecting water quality, natural resources, and the solitude at Quabbin more difficult.

In order to responsibly provide recreational access to the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System, DCR/OWM has developed and will enforce the following public access policies (**Table 9**). These policies describe both specific and general conditions under which recreational activities are allowed and explain why other activities are prohibited. The Division's approach to these policies is based on the American Water Works Association Policy on the Recreational Use of Domestic Water Supply Reservoirs (**Appendix B**).

The summary of access policies and changes made since 1998 is summarized in **Table 10** and detailed in the individual activity sheets found in this Section. In total, there are thirty fact sheets representing historical, existing, and potential recreational uses of drinking water supply lands and waters. These activities have been grouped into four categories: 1) Vehicle Access; 2) Foot Access; 3) Water Access; and 4) Other Access. **Table 9** is a list of all the access policies and restrictions. The fact sheets which follow Table 8 provide more specific detail of the policy.

A. Public Access Master Policy - 2006

Public Access to the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System

Public access to and the recreational use of the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System, the Quabbin Reservoir, and DCR/DWSP/OWM-managed land, are limited, controlled, and monitored to protect the public drinking water supply by reducing public health risks. Public access to, and recreation within, the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System will be consistent with all applicable legislation. Except for those activities specifically authorized by statute or existing DCR/OWM regulations, any new access and/or new recreational activities or significant changes to existing access and/or recreational activities may be permitted only when they do not conflict with ongoing watershed management activities or authorized research, and do not degrade the following values:

- Public drinking water supply protection,
- Apparent wilderness character,
- Natural resources (forest health, biodiversity), and
- Historic and pre-Columbian sites.

Existing authorized activities, whether authorized by statute or regulations, will be periodically evaluated to determine if they conflict with the above values. If conflicts are identified, appropriate efforts to eliminate or minimize negative impacts will be made.

Table 9 Public Access Policies - 2006

<i>Activity</i>	Quabbin Park	Quabbin Reservation	Off-Reservation	Quabbin Reservoir	Regulating Ponds	Off-Watershed Ponds ²³
VEHICLE ACCESS						
Driving for Sightseeing	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹					
Snowmobiling			<input type="checkbox"/> ²			
ATV Riding						
Bicycling -Designated roads	<input type="checkbox"/> ³	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁵			
Off-road Bicycling						
Sledding	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁶	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
FOOT ACCESS						
Walking/Hiking/Snowshoeing	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁷	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁷	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>
Cross-country skiing			<input type="checkbox"/>			
Hunting/Trapping	⁸	⁸	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Ice Fishing/Ice Skating			<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/> ⁹
Shore Fishing	¹⁰	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹²	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹²
WATER ACCESS						
Boat Fishing			<input type="checkbox"/> ¹³	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹³
Canoeing/Kayaking/Boating					<input type="checkbox"/> ¹⁴	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹⁵
Wading (fishing, launching)	¹⁶	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹⁷	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹⁷	¹⁸	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹⁸	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹⁶
Swimming						
OTHER ACCESS						
Group Activities (e.g., weddings)	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹⁹	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹⁹	<input type="checkbox"/> ¹⁹			
Geocaching/Questing	<input type="checkbox"/> ²⁰	<input type="checkbox"/> ²⁰	<input type="checkbox"/> ²⁰			
Wildlife/Bird Watching	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁷	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁷	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁷	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁷	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁷	<input type="checkbox"/> ⁷
Night Access	²¹	<input type="checkbox"/> ²²	<input type="checkbox"/> ²²			<input type="checkbox"/> ²¹
Organized Sports	²⁴	²⁴	²⁴			
Dogs/Other Animals						
Horseback Riding						
Collecting/Metal Detecting						
Camping						
Fishing Derbies						
Target Shooting						
Advertising						
Marking – Trail/Roads (unauthorized)						
Alcohol (possession of)						
Other	Please call the Quabbin Visitor Center 413-323-7221 or Watershed Ranger Station 413-323-0192					


LEGEND:

Prohibited 

Allowed - general restrictions 

Specific Conditions  #

General Restrictions:

 **General public access within the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System is restricted to one hour before sunrise and one hour after sunset through gates or designated (posted) areas only. Any activity which injures or defaces the property of the Commonwealth is strictly prohibited. This chart is based on the Watershed Protection Regulations 350 CMR 11.00, copies of which are available at the Quabbin Visitor Center. Littering is strictly prohibited. Carry in/Carry out. Don't feed wildlife.**

Specific Restrictions:

¹ The Winsor Dam and Goodnough Dike have restricted vehicle access for security reasons.

² Snowmobiling is allowed only on the DCR designated trail located on Off-Reservation land. 304 CMR 12.29 applies.

³ Bicycling is only allowed on designated roads in Quabbin Park. See DCR Bicycling maps. Helmets and protective gear are required by MA law for children under 16 years of age and recommended for others

⁴ Bicycling is allowed only on designated roads through DCR gates 29, 30, 31, 35, 40, 43A & B, and 44. Bicycling is only allowed on designated roads through Gate 8 during fishing season. See DCR Bicycling map for designated roads.

⁵ Bicycling is allowed on main forest roads only within Off-Reservation lands with seasonal restrictions (e.g., mud season).

⁶ Sledding or any other kind of sliding activity is prohibited on the reservoir, the dams and other structures.

⁷ Walking, hiking, or snowshoeing access is allowed within the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed system, except in restricted areas (e.g., Prescott Peninsula, posted Administration Areas, Reservoir islands and along the baffle dams-November 15 – June 15).

⁸ Hunting and Trapping are prohibited except by special permit during the Quabbin Controlled Deer Hunt and associated Paraplegic Hunt. Contact the Quabbin Visitor Center for more information.

⁹ Ice fishing, ice skating, and carry-in boat access allowed on three Off-watershed ponds: South Spectacle, Bassett and Peppers Mill Ponds only. Please call Watershed Rangers, if accessing, as a courtesy at 413-323-0192.

¹⁰ No fishing in Quabbin Park except catch-and-release fly fishing (allowed all year) below the Winsor Dam in the Swift River, unless posted.

¹¹ Shore fishing along the Reservoir and along streams is permitted between Gates 8-West Branch Swift River, and 22-44 (except on baffledams), by foot, during the designated Quabbin Fishing Season only. See the current Quabbin Fishing Guide and Map available at the Quabbin Visitor Center.

¹² Shore fishing within off-reservation lands and along off-watershed ponds is allowed year round according to State Fishing regulations.

¹³ Carry-in boat access is allowed on off-watershed ponds. See Night Access Policy, if applicable.

¹⁴ Boat access on designated areas of reservoir or regulating ponds requires valid MA Fishing License and size/motor restrictions. Wearing boots is mandatory if wading while launching or removing boats at designated areas from the Reservoir. Fishing access using canoes, kayaks, or jon boats is allowed only through Gate 31 above regulating dam and through Gate 43 on Pottapaug Pond with restrictions. Contact the Quabbin Visitor Center at 413-323-7221 for more information regarding current Fishing Guide.

¹⁵ Allowed subject to MA Boating regulations. Please call Watershed Rangers, if accessing, as a courtesy at 413-323-0192

¹⁶ Wading is allowed Off-watershed below the Winsor Dam Power Station on the Swift River

¹⁷ Wading with boots is allowed between Gate 8-West Branch Swift River, and Gate 22-44, except in restricted areas, and in Off-Reservation tributaries.

¹⁸ Wading is prohibited except while launching or removing boats while wearing boots, at designated boat launch areas.

¹⁹ Allowed without a permit for groups of less than 25 individuals and/or less than 10 cars and/or 10 motorcycles. Permit required for group of 25 through 100 individuals and/or 10-40 cars/motorcycles or 1 bus. Permit and Ranger required for larger groups or other combinations.

²⁰ Special permit from Visitor Center required for any cache placement.

²¹ Night access within Quabbin Park is prohibited with two exceptions. It is allowed without a permit on Swift River below Y pool, if access is from Route 9, and on Peppers Mill Pond.

²² Night access within Quabbin Reservation is allowed by permit for pedestrians only through Gates 16, 31, 35, 41, and 43 only during the designated Quabbin Fishing season. Night access directly from 122 is allowed without a permit on South Spectacle Pond (off-watershed). Night access is allowed on Off-Reservation lands with special permit. Contact Quabbin Visitor Center for permit information.

²³ South Spectacle, Bassett, and Peppers Mill Ponds.

²⁴ Prohibited except with written permission from the Commissioner.

B. General Access Conditions

DCR-OWM has general conditions under which allowed activities must be conducted. These conditions are detailed below and summarized in **Table 9**. However, despite these general conditions, the DCR-OWM may close its properties to public access during emergency situations.

General Conditions

- It is the responsibility of the visitor to know and abide by the applicable rules, regulations, and conditions for access.
- General public access within the Quabbin Reservoir Watershed System is restricted to one hour before sunrise and one hour after sunset through gates or designated (posted) areas only, unless authorized by a written permit from DCR or its designee.
- Any activity which injures or defaces the property of the Commonwealth is strictly prohibited. Do not feed the wildlife.
- Visitors are advised that active logging operations may be in progress on DCR properties. Please avoid visiting such areas, entering logging areas, or coming within three hundred feet of logging equipment.
- Visitors shall respect the rights of owners of adjacent property and shall not trespass on private lands.
- Because of the importance of protecting water quality, visitors shall avoid depositing human excreta on watershed lands by using portable toilets and planning accordingly.
- No objects shall be washed in any watercourse.
- Visitors are asked to limit smoking activities and to properly extinguish all embers to help prevent wildfires.
- Please report any suspicious or dangerous activity on Watershed Lands or Waters by calling the MA State Police at 413-323-7561.
- If you have questions, please contact the Quabbin Visitor Center 413-323-7221 or Quabbin Watershed Rangers 413-323-0191.

C. Americans with Disabilities Act and Access Policies

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990. This federal act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. The Act covers five areas called Titles: Title I: Employment; Title II State & Local Government; Title III Places of Public Accommodations and Commercial Facilities; Title IV Telecommunications, and Title V: Miscellaneous Provisions. The following section describes how the DCR/OWM ensures that individuals with disabilities are not excluded from activities and services through policies or practices described in this Plan.

In 1993, the Division completed the ADA Transition Plan Workbook – Self-Evaluation for Quabbin Facilities. The exercise identified areas for improvement most of which have been completed.

1. Title II – Public Entities (State and Local Government)

Title II prohibits discrimination in all programs, activities, and services of public entities. This Title applies to all State and local governments, their departments and agencies, and any other instrumentalities or special purpose districts of State or local governments. A brief description of alterations or additions made at DCR/OWM-Quabbin facilities, services, programs, and policies follows.

Facilities, Services, and Programs

The Quabbin Reservoir has several facilities that are significantly used by the general public: 1) the Quabbin Administration Building; 2) three boat launch areas; 3) the Quabbin Park observation tower; 4) restrooms. The Quabbin Administration Building is a three-story brick structure which houses a Visitor Center, administrative offices, professional offices, and a water quality testing lab. The Visitor Center is located on the 1st floor and contains audio visual equipment for showing slides and films. The space can accommodate up to fifty-five visitors for meetings. The three boat launch areas are used as access for rental equipment and privately owned craft. Shore fishing is allowed in designated areas. The Quabbin Tower is a several story structure with an observation deck for viewing the Reservoir. Below the tower is a stone faced building that contains restroom facilities for the general public's use.

OWM efforts to comply with the ADA requirements have included alterations to the facilities; acquisition of additional facilities; and relocations or substitutions to services and programs. Examples of alterations made to the Quabbin Administration Building include: accessible signage, access curb cut, ramp and handbar construction, automatic door opener, and accessible unisex restroom. Alterations to the boat launch areas include installation of accessible public toilets (men's and women's). Examples of acquisition of additional facilities include the acquisition of portable, accessible toilets at Areas 2 & 3, Hank's Picnic Area, and Quabbin Tower Parking Area.

Changes made to services and programs include the addition of the Paraplegic Deer Hunt in collaboration with MassWildlife. DCR/OWM-Quabbin hosts a annual three day hunt for paraplegic sportsmen and women. In 2005, there were 7 participants in the deer hunt at Quabbin. Within the Administration Building, the 2nd floor library was moved to the 1st floor. In addition, a 3rd floor meeting room for guests and staff was moved to the 1st floor for Visitor Center programs and meetings.

Alternative accessible sites have been constructed at Boat Launch Area 1 where an accessible fishing pier is available. In addition, in 2005, the Student Conservation Association worked on one trail – Forest Management Trail near Goodnough Dike - to make it more accessible for all-terrain wheelchairs. Work along Webster Road sponsored by the DCR Universal Access program offered an accessible hiking program on these trails in 2005.

2. Service Animals

Service animals perform some of the functions and tasks that the individual with a disability cannot perform for him or herself. The ADA defines a service animal as any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. If they meet this definition, animals are considered service animals under the ADA regardless of whether they have been licensed or certified by a state or local government. A service animal is a working animal, not a pet. “Seeing eye dogs” are one type of service animal, used by some individuals who are blind.

If DCR’s Watershed Rangers are uncertain if an animal is a service animal or not, they will ask the person who has the animal if it is a service animal required because of a disability. To comply with the ADA, the DCR/OWM modified its regulation prohibiting animals on the watershed to allow the use of service animal by a person with a disability.

D. Summary of Policy Changes

Various updates, changes, and clarifications to the Division’s 1998 public access policies have been made in this plan (**Table 10**). For more detailed description see the following fact sheets. Overall, the Division has modified its policies to make them less confusing and more consistent. Due to changes in people’s recreational preferences two new policies have been added – geocaching (allowed with conditions) and off-road bicycling (prohibited).

Table 10 Summary of Public Access Policy Changes

Activity	1998 MDC/DWM Policy	2006 DCR Policy
Driving for Sightseeing	Allowed with Restrictions	Modified – Security zones added
Snowmobiling	Allowed with Restrictions	Modified – Trail Designated
ATV Riding	Prohibited	No Change – Prohibited
Bicycling-Designated Roads	Allowed with Restrictions	Modified – Designated Roads Added
Off-road Bicycling	No Policy	Policy Added – Prohibited
Sledding	Allowed with Restrictions	No Change – Allowed with Restrictions
Walking/Hiking/Snowshoeing	Allowed with Restrictions	Modified – Security Zones Added

Activity	1998 MDC/DWM Policy	2006 DCR Policy
Cross-country Skiing	Allowed with Restrictions	No Change – Allowed with Restrictions on Off-Reservation only
Hunting/Trapping	Allowed with Restrictions	No Change – Allowed with Restrictions
Ice Fishing/Ice Skating	Allowed with Restrictions	Modified – Off-Watershed Ponds Clarified
Shore Fishing	Allowed with Restrictions	Modified – Access Points Clarified
Boat Fishing	Allowed with Restrictions	Modified-Boat Restrictions Clarified
Canoeing/Kayaking/Boating	Allowed with Restrictions	Modified-Boat Restrictions Clarified
Wading (fishing/launching)	Allowed with Restrictions	Modified-Requirements Clarified
Swimming	Prohibited	No Change – Prohibited
Group Activities	Allowed with Restrictions	Modified-Requirements Enhanced and Clarified
Geocaching/Questing	No Policy	Policy Added – Allowed with Restrictions
Wildlife Viewing /Bird Watching	Allowed with Restrictions	Modified – Restrictions Clarified
Night Access	Allowed with Restrictions	Modified – Restrictions Modified
Organized Sports	Prohibited	No Change – Prohibited
Dogs/Other Animals	Prohibited	Modified – Prohibition Clarified
Horseback Riding	Prohibited	No Change – Prohibited
Collecting/Metal Detecting	Prohibited	Modified – Restrictions Clarified
Camping	Prohibited	No Change – Prohibited
Fishing Derbies	Prohibited	Modified – Prohibition Clarified
Target Shooting	Prohibited	No Change – Prohibited
Advertising	Prohibited	No Change – Prohibited
Marking-Trails/Roads	Prohibited	No Change – Prohibited
Alcohol-Possession of	Prohibited	No Change – Prohibited
Other	NA	NA

Source: DCR/OWM, 2005

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